

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 060747Z DEC Y

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6681

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 5473

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEAN, PFOR, JA

SUBJ: JAPANESE SOUTHEAST ASIAN CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING

SUMMARY: WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE SEA SITUATION, THE ATTENDEES OF THE JAPANESE SOUTHEAST ASIAN CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING WERE APPRISED OF SEVERAL KEY GOJ POLICY DECISIONS. JAPAN INTENDS TO APPROACH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALLY TO STRESS THAT U.S. PRESENCE IS ESSENTIAL TO REGIONAL STABILITY. JAPAN ALSO PLANS ON OFFICIALLY DISCUSSING THE NEED FOR IMPROVED SRV-US RELATIONS. THE GOJ IS CONCERNED OVER THE WILLINGNESS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRESS TO SUPPORT THE "PACIFIC DOCTRINE'S" CALL FOR A CONTINUED U.S. STAKE IN SEA. THE GOJ HAS CONCLUDED THAT ALTHOUGH HANOI WISHES TO REMAIN OUTSIDE THE SOVIET ORBIT, WITHOUT U.S. ECONOMIC INVESTMENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE SRV WILL BE UNABLE TO AVOID CLOSER USSR LINKS. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIOR TO CONVENING OF JAPANESE SOUTHEAST ASIAN CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING IN BANGKOK NOVEMBER 25-26, JAPANESE AMBASSADOR HORI ASKED ME FOR A RUN-DOWN ON WHAT WE KNEW OF SOVIET PRESENCE HERE AND ON U.S. VIEWS REGARDING RECENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN SEA. IN DOING SO, HE TOLD ME HE WOULD BE GLAD TO PASS ALONG CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY HIMSELF AND HIS COLLEAGUES. I TOOK HIM UP ON HIS OFFER ON DECEMBER 3. HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW:

2. HORI SAID HE WAS RATHER DISAPPOINTED OVER FACT THAT NUMBER OF ATTENDEES (FIVE ASEAN AMBASSADORS PLUS CHIEFS OF MISSION FROM VIETNAM, LAOS, BURMA, AUSTRALIA, AND NEW ZEALAND) MADE GIVE-AND-TAKE DIFFICULT. CHAIRMAN OF MEETING, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARITA, RAN SESSION MORE AS AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE THAN A ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION.

3. FOUR MAIN TOPICS WERE ADDRESSED: THE GREAT POWERS IN SEA; A REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN EACH COUNTRY; INDOCHINA (WITH EMPHASIS ON VIETNAM); AND JAPANESE RELATIONS WITH ASEAN. BEFORE PROCEEDING, HOWEVER, ARITA SET THE STAGE BY PRESENTING ASSESSMENT OF STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE U.S., THE PRC, AND VIETNAM.

4. U.S.-JAPANESE RELATIONS WERE DESCRIBED BY ARITA AS BEING ON A SOUND BASIS, WITH NO MAJOR PROBLEMS. UNDERSTANDING WAS INCREASING AMONG JAPANESE PEOPLE ON DESIRABILITY OF U.S. BASES IN JAPAN AND THE SECURITY TREATY. "MINOR" PROBLEMS EXISTING WITH THE U.S. CONCERNED FISHERIES, CIVIL AIR SERVICES, AND THE \$4 BILLION JAPANESE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SURPLUS FOR 1976. HOWEVER, ARITA EXPRESSED CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE OVER THE WILLINGNESS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND CONGRESS TO MAINTAIN SUPPORT FOR CONCEPT IN THE "PACIFIC DOCTRINE" OF THE U.S. HAVING A CONTINUING STAKE IN SEA. JAPAN BELIEVES THAT U.S. PRESENCE IN THE REGION IS ESSENTIAL TO REGIONAL STABILITY AND WOULD MAKE THIS POSITION KNOWN OFFICIALLY TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION SHORTLY AFTER IT TOOK OFFICE.

5. ON THE PRC, ARITA EXPRESSED OPTIMISM REGARDING AN INCREASE IN SINO-JAPANESE TRADE UNDER THE NEW REGIME IN PEKING. HE WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC ON THE SCORE OF AN IMPROVEMENT IN POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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RELATIONS, AND NOTED (WITHOUT INDICATING WHY) THE CHINESE WERE SAYING THAT THESE RELATIONS HAD DROPPED BELOW THE LEVEL SET IN THE TANAKA-CHOU EN-LAI JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF 1972. ARITA FORESAW NO QUICK IMPROVEMENT IN THIS SITUATION (THE JAPANESE CONSUL GENERAL IN HONG KONG ADDED THAT THE PRC WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., AND IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT A CONTINUED U.S. PRESENCE ON TAIWAN INDEFINITELY, INCLUDING U.S. TROOPS).

6. REGARDING VIETNAM, ARITA REFERRED TO ABSENCE OF SOVIET TROOPS THERE AND LACK OF SRV MEMBERSHIP IN COMECON AND INFERRED FROM THIS THAT HANOI WANTED TO REMAIN OUTSIDE THE SOVIET ORBIT. HE FELT THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DO SO, THOUGH, UNLESS THE U.S. HELPED OUT IN SRV ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION, WHICH IN TURN REQUIRED ESTABLISHMENT OF U.S.-HANOI DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. AGAIN, JAPAN WOULD MAKE THIS POINT OFFICIALLY TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AFTER IT TOOK OFFICE. JAPAN ITSELF WOULD PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO VIETNAM OVER AND ABOVE SUM AGREED UPON WHEN JAPAN EXTENDED RECOGNITION PROVIDED THE SRV SETTLED THE QUESTION OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE DEBT. HOWEVER, JAPANESE AID TO HANOI WOULD BE LESS THAN THAT PROVIDED THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, WHICH RETAINED A GREATER PRIORITY, AND WOULD NOT BE PROVIDED THROUGH OEDC CHANNELS BUT WOULD BE CARRIED OUT VIA JAPANESE EX-IM BANK FINANCING.

7. TURNING TO REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS ON ROLE OF GREAT POWERS, MEETING CONCLUDED RE USSR THAT U.S. SHOULD NOT BE UNDULY CONCERNED OVER GROWTH OF SOVIET INFLUENCE SINCE THIS GROWTH WOULD BE RELATIVELY LIMITED. ONLY "BASES" WHICH SOVIETS ENJOYED WERE IN VIETNAM AND LAOS AT SOME DISTANCE FROM BULK OF SEA. CHINESE AT PRESENT WERE NOT PUSHING THEMSELVES IN SEA. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS CONSENSUS AMONG THOSE PRESENT THAT CONTINUED U.S. PRESENCE IN THE REGION WAS NECESSARY TO BALANCE OFF THE OTHER TWO MAJOR POWERS.

8. COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY REVIEWS:

A. BURMA - EVIDENCE EMERGING THAT BURMA IS NOW SHIFTING FROM A CLOSED ECONOMY TO A MORE OPEN ONE, BUT NOT AT SACRIFICE OF BURMESE SOCIALISM.

B. THAILAND - NEW GOVERNMENT IS MUCH MORE OUTSPOKENLY ANTI-COMMUNIST THAN ITS PREDECESSOR, AND SOME CONCERN EXPRESSED
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THAT THIS WILL INHIBIT ESTABLISHMENT OF BETTER THAI-LAOS AND THAI-HANOI RELATIONS WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO REGIONAL STABILITY.

C. LAOS - COUNTRY IS IN A BAD WAY ECONOMICALLY AND THE SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE. PART OF PROBLEM DUE TO A PILE-UP OF SOVIET AID GOODS IN HAIPHONG HARBOR WHICH THE VIETNAMESE ARE REFUSING TO SHIP ONWARD.

D. PHILIPPINES - NO REAL POLITICAL CHALLENGE EXISTS TO MARCOS. U.S.-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS WILL REMAIN BASICALLY GOOD THANKS TO THE LONG HISTORY OF AFFINITY BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

E. MALAYSIA - HUSSEIN ONN SHOULD REMAIN IN POWER FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, SINCE THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION TO HIM AT THIS TIME.

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(NOTE: AMBASSADOR HORI DID NOT MENTION CAMBODIA, PERHAPS BECAUSE JAPAN HAS NO REPRESENTATION THERE, BUT POSSIBLY ALSO BECAUSE DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA ARE OBSCURE.)

F. SINGAPORE - THE FALL OF BOTH THAILAND AND MALAYSIA TO COMMUNISM WOULD BRING SINGAPORE'S COLLAPSE WITHIN THREE WEEKS (HORI'S OWN ASSESSMENT BASED ON WORLD WAR II EVENTS) BUT REELECTION OF LEE KUAN YEW SEEMS ASSURED BECAUSE ECONOMIC SITUATION REMAINS GOOD. AS A CHINESE ENCLAVE IN NON-CHINESE SEA, HOWEVER, SINGAPORE IS STILL REGARDED WITH SUSPICION AND IS ITSELF WARY OF ITS NEIGHBORS (AS WITNESS ITS UN VOTE ON TIMOR).

G. INDONESIA - SUHARTO'S POWER BASE HAS NARROWED DUE TO INFIGHTING AMONG THE MILITARY, BUT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT WILL STILL SEE SUHARTO AT ITS HEAD EVEN THOUGH COMPOSITION OF HIS

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MILITARY BACKING MAY CHANGE.

9. MORE ON VIETNAM. JAPANESE AMBASSADOR TO HANOI BELIEVES THAT SRV IS 20 YEARS BEHIND ASEAN NATIONS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND HENCE WILL PUT FIRST PRIORITY ON INTERNAL MATTERS IN ORDER TO CATCH UP. IT WILL ATTEMPT TO DIRECT HALF ITS TRADE TOWARD THE WEST TO BALANCE OFF TRADE TIES WITH THE COMMUNIST WORLD, BUT THE WEST, PARTICULARLY THE U.S., MUST RESPOND IN ORDER FOR THIS POLICY TO SUCCEED. PROPOSITION WAS PUT FORWARD THAT JAPAN SHOULD ACT AS A "BRIDGE" BETWEEN SRV AND THE U.S. AND BETWEEN SRV AND ASEAN, BUT PROPOSAL WAS DISMISSED AS BEING IMPRACTICAL.

10. JAPAN AND ASEAN. ASEAN'S ROLE HIGHLY REGARDED, EVEN TO POINT WHERE IT WAS ASSUMED WHOLE REGION WOULD GO COMMUNIST IF ASEAN FAILS. AS NOTED, JAPAN WOULD BROADEN ITS ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE ASEAN COUNTRIES. JAPAN'S EFFORTS TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN ON ECONOMIC MATTERS HAVE BORN FRUIT: LETTER HAS BEEN SENT TO JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTRY BY SINGAPORE FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF ASEAN YANDING COMMITTEE AGREEING TO JAPAN'S REQUEST FOR CONSULTATIONS BUT INDICATING THAT DETAILED ARRANGEMENT SHOULD BE WORKED OUT WITH INDONESIA, THE ASEAN COUNTRY SELECTED TO HAVE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR RELATIONS WITH JAPAN.

11. ATTENTION WAS PAID TO POSSIBILITY OF REVIVING THE MINISTRIAL COUNCIL FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (MEDSEA), NOT SO MUCH BECAUSE THE ORGANIZATION APPEARED TO HAVE ANY GREAT UTILITY UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES - IN FACT IT WAS CONSIDERED MORIBUND - BUT AS A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR THE INDO-CHINESE COUNTRIES TO JOIN TOGETHER WITH THE ASEAN NATIONS AND JAPAN IN JOINT DISCUSSIONS OF ECONOMIC MATTERS.
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